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From: Bragan, Mary Jo

Sent: Fri 12/4/2015 9:06:22 PM

Subject: Hot Issues Newsletter - December 4, 2015

Request for Water Division Director's Input and Reminders

•□□□□□□□ Nothing for this week

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Noteworthy Items

Conservation

USDA Announces \$350 Million for Conservation Easements Program. USDA announced \$350 million in funding available to help protect and restore grasslands, wetlands, and working lands through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). The ACEP was

created by the 2014 Farm Bill to protect critical water resources (including drinking water) and wildlife habitat, and encourage private owners to maintain land for farming and ranching. To learn about ACEP: nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted

Contaminants Monitoring Rule

EPA Proposes the Design for Draft Unregulated Contaminants Monitoring Rule 4.

EPA has proposed the design for the fourth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR 4), which identifies analytical methods for water system monitoring for a total of 30 contaminants/groups, consisting of ten cyanotoxins/groups, two metals, eight pesticides plus one pesticide manufacturing byproduct, three brominated haloacetic acid groups of disinfection byproducts, three alcohols, and three semivolatile organic chemicals. Implementation and monitoring activities for these chemicals are expected to take place from 2017-2021. For more information: [Click Here](#).

Harmful Algal Blooms

EPA Releases Strategic Plan for Protecting Drinking Water from Harmful Algal Blooms.

EPA has released a strategic plan outlining actions to address algal toxins in drinking water. The agency will work on treatment techniques and monitoring technologies, develop innovative mapping tools to help protect drinking water sources, provide technical support to states and public water systems, issue health advisories, and support activities to protect drinking water sources. To read the plan: [Click Here](#).

Laboratory Fraud

EPA OIG Podcast on Laboratory Fraud. EPA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) interviewed Dr. Bruce Woods, a chemist in the Electronic Crimes Division within the OIG's Office of Investigations, discusses his recent webinar for the Association of Public Health Laboratories on lab fraud. The podcast describes lab fraud and its potential impacts, as well as the OIG's role in combating lab fraud. There is also advice on controlling fraud in laboratories and reporting suspected fraud to EPA. To listen: [Click Here](#).

Tribal Issues

EPA Updates Guidance for Clean Water Indian Set-Aside Funding. EPA recently published revised guidance and an associated FAQ describing the policies and procedures for administering the Clean Water Indian Set-Aside (CWISA) funding program. The program's mission is to protect public health and the environment by

improving wastewater sanitation facilities for tribes and Alaskan villages. This guidance is the first revision in over 20 years. To learn more: [Click Here](#).

Watersheds

EPA Announces \$3.75 Million Grant for Local Projects to Protect and Sustain Healthy Watersheds. OWOW has made an official award to the US Endowment for Forestry and Communities (Endowment). The purpose of the grant program is to accelerate and expand the strategic protection of healthy freshwater ecosystems and their watersheds. The cooperative agreement, totaling \$3.75 million in federal funding over six years. The Endowment will manage an annual subgrant award process to fund projects that develop healthy watersheds efforts and support local projects. The first Request for Proposals will be available soon. For updates on the subgrant process, a planned webinar, and the posting of the subaward RFP, check the Endowments website: usendowment.org/partnerships/healthywatershedsconsor.html

In the News _____

Budget

The Countdown is On...Again. ASDWA Newsletter (December 4)...Leaders in both chambers say that they are working long and hard to finalize a spending plan that reflects key Administration priorities as well as key issues important to the Congressional majority. Whether that will take place by the end of next week remains to be seen. As retiring Senate Appropriator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) said, "We've got the omni but we don't have the bus." Neither chamber is ready to hold floor discussions and are signaling that major deliberations won't happen until next week. Chief House Appropriator Hal Rogers (R-KY) has announced that he hopes to post a complete omnibus package on Monday. Following recent House tradition, that means that the House would vote on a final bill on Wednesday which leaves very little time for the Senate to deliberate and no room to resolve any unanticipated complications such as policy riders...by midnight on Friday.

Cadmium

EPA To Update Cadmium Criteria. *By Tiffany Stecker, E&E Reporter.* EPA is preparing to update what it considers acceptable levels of cadmium in aquatic and marine life. In a notice published in the *Federal Register*, the agency said it's requesting comments from scientist on what would be the first update of cadmium criteria since 2001...The draft 2015 updated criteria

include 70 new species of aquatic life. The recommended levels are roughly the same as those in the 2001 report, with the draft freshwater chronic criterion slightly less stringent than what was recommended nearly 15 years ago. For more on the story:

eenews.net/greenwire/2015/12/01/stories/1060028749 For a copy of the report: [Click Here](#)

EPA Finances

Agency's Finances in Order – IG. *By Kevin Bogardus, E&E Reporter.* EPA's finances are sound, according to the agency's internal watchdog. In a report by the EPA inspector general, the agency's financial records for fiscal 2014 and 2015 were found to be in order...Nevertheless, the agency watchdog pointed to EPA's accounting for software as "a material weakness" -- an issue that lingers for the agency since the IG also highlighted it in last year's audit...The inspector general also dug up "significant deficiencies" in its audit, such as not accurately reporting \$8 million received by the agency from a \$9 million Superfund consent decree and not resolving a \$2.6 million cash difference between EPA and Treasury balances. In addition, EPA's financial office should strengthen its password change procedures, while the agency's travel system should better protect credit card information, according to the IG. For the entire story: eenews.net/eenewspm/2015/11/17/stories/1060028162

Groundwater

Earth Has 6 Quintillion Gallons Of Groundwater, But Supplies At Risk. *Greenwire.* There are 6 quintillion -- that's 6,000,000,000,000,000,000 -- gallons of groundwater under the Earth's surface, according to a new study, but the amount available for human use could run out. "It is important to know how much groundwater there is because more than a third of the population in the USA and the world drink groundwater every day and it is crucial to agriculture and the environment," said lead author Tom Gleeson of the University of Victoria about the study, published yesterday in *Nature Geoscience*. For more: eenews.net/greenwire/2015/11/17/stories/1060028114

Microbeads

Panel signs off on microbeads, rural water system bills. *By Sam Pearson, E&E reporter.* Lawmakers on the House Energy and Commerce Committee sent two bills to the House floor this morning to aid rural water systems and ban microbeads from cosmetic products. Both bills were approved by voice vote.

The microbeads bill, H.R. 1321...would halt manufacturing of plastic microbeads by July 1, 2017, and ban the delivery of new cosmetic products containing microbeads by July 1, 2018...Lawmakers also approved by voice vote S. 611, the "Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act," a bill to increase technical assistance to rural

drinking water utilities. To read more:

eenews.net/greenwire/2015/11/18/stories/1060028223 For a copy H.R. 1321: [Click Here](#) / S. 611: [Click Here](#).

Water Trading

Offset Program A 'Regulatory Avoidance Scheme' – Report. By Tiffany Stecker, E&E Reporter. A new report alleges several companies in Ohio and Pennsylvania took advantage of water quality credit schemes to pollute waters while operating legally. Food and Water Watch released the report this morning, highlighting a consulting company, a cheese maker and a power plant for using pollution offsets to operate without reducing discharges of nitrogen and phosphorus. The report calls the programs, which have been implemented at various levels in 22 states, "a regulatory avoidance scheme fraught with unaccountability that is destined to destroy waterways and communities." For the full story:

eenews.net/eenewspm/2015/11/18/stories/1060028248 For the report: [Click Here](#)

WIFIA

Highway Bill Opens Door for Tax-Exempt Utility Bonds. By Tiffany Stecker, E&E reporter.

The conference report for the long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill includes a provision that would allow utilities to use tax-exempt public bonds to rebuild water and sewer systems. The fix in the highway bill removes a ban enacted in last year's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) that would have prevented municipalities from using tax-exempt bonds in combination with WIFIA loans... For the entire story:

eenews.net/greenwire/2015/12/03/stories/1060028915

Workplace Issues

OPM Sets Up Website for Hacked Employees. By Kevin Bogardus, E&E Reporter.

Wondering if your personal information was stolen in this year's massive breach of federal government data? There is now a website for that. The Office of Personnel Management has set up an online verification center where people can check whether they were one of the 21.5 million people whose private data was compromised in the hack. OPM has already been sending letters to individuals notifying them that they have been affected by the breach, but the center can help those who believe they have been affected, too. For the entire story:

eenews.net/greenwire/2015/12/02/stories/1060028834 To link to the online verification center: opm.gov/cybersecurity

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

Events, Webinars and Trainings

December 8th. Ahead of the Curve - Implementing Green Infrastructure in Rural and Growing Communities Webinar. This webcast will showcase two communities, Monona, Iowa and Clarkesville, Georgia that are ahead of the curve in using green infrastructure to address their stormwater management challenges. Rural communities and small MS4s in particular will want to tune in to learn how to replicate these projects at home.

Time: Tuesday, December 8th from 1:00-2:30pm Eastern

To Register: [Click Here](#)

December 16th. How to Build and Grow a Watershed Fund. The National Forest Foundation has been a part of many watershed funds, including the Northern Arizona Forest Fund. Learn from, **Marcus Selig, National Forest Foundation**, how they build new partnerships for watershed restoration. **Rebecca Davidson, Salt River Project**, will share with us SRP's strategy for securing different income streams.

Time: Wednesday, December 16th from 11:00 am – 12:00pm PACIFIC

To Register: carpediemwest.org/watershed-investment-network-how-to-build-and-grow-a-watershed-fund/

December 16th. Use of Real-Time HABs Sensors for Drinking Water Treatment Webinar. LimnoTech will host a free webinar to discuss how HAB sensors are used in drinking water treatment plants across Ohio to monitor for the presence and abundance of cyanobacteria in source and raw water. This session is intended to provide insights into the equipment needed; approximate costs; discuss how operators use data from the sensors in real-time; and how the sensors might help minimize treatment and monitoring costs. You must pre-register for the webinar and attendance is limited.

Time: Wednesday, December 16th from 11:00-12:00pm Eastern

To Register: [Click Here](#).

Opportunities and Grants

January 8th Deadline. Support of the Five Star Restoration Training Grant. EPA is soliciting proposals from eligible applicants to manage the Five Star Restoration

Training Grant program. The program brings together citizen groups, corporations, youth conservation corps, students, landowners and government agencies to undertake projects that achieve environmental training through voluntary community/watershed-based wetland restoration projects. **For more information:** [Click Here](#).

January 14th Deadline. The National Forest Foundation Matching Awards Program (MAP). The National Forest Foundation (NFF) Matching Awards Program (MAP) provides funding for the implementation of on-the-ground conservation and restoration projects that have an immediate, quantifiable impact on the National Forest System. These projects provide a lasting impact to the lands, waters and wildlife of the National Forest System through the alteration of the physical environment. For more information: [Click Here](#).

January 19th Deadline. USGS Seeks National Ground Water Monitoring Network Proposals. The USGS will award up to \$2 million in cooperative agreements to support participation in the National Ground-Water Monitoring Network (NGWMN) in 2016. The NGWMN is designed as a cooperative groundwater data collection, management, and reporting system that will be based on data from selected wells in existing federal, state, tribal, and local groundwater monitoring networks. For more information: [Click Here](#). To apply: [Click Here](#) (Funding opportunity number G16AS00008).

Thanks,

Mary Jo Bragan

OW Lead Region Coordinator
